

# COMIC RELIEF

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After a busy day, my husband and I sometimes sit down to watch a show, and our favorites are those that fall into the mystery/suspense/thriller category. But the ones we most enjoy provide a few moments of comic relief for the audience. They contain scenes that break the tension. And I have found that I do life best when I can interrupt the challenging moments with moments of lightheartedness. It doesn't make the tough moments go away, but it makes them easier for me to deal with. **I don't know what your year has looked like, but mine has had some moments of pure heartbreak. Right now, I need some comic relief.** If you need some relief, too, then allow me to share a moment from my past that might entertain you. To best visualize this story, you can picture our children at ages 8 (the twins Heath and Emily), 5 (Seth), and 3 (Megan). My husband John was our fearless leader (I'll leave his age out of this)!

## Making Memories

I had often heard it said that family camping trips were one of the best things you could do with your kids. Although I had not no memory of this myself as a child, I

decided to give it a try, because I guess I wanted to be a good parent. So when we lived in Lincoln, NE the opportunity presented itself. We actually took a couple of camping trips with another family and I put forth a great deal of effort to learn about this exciting new memory-making adventure. But at the end of each camping trip, I found myself making the same observation: I am doing everything I do at home, but it is harder! Confusion would then set in, but I concluded I must be doing something wrong. So I continued to try (perhaps somewhat reluctantly!).

**My most memorable camping trip was also my final camping trip.** One summer our church organized a church-wide weekend camping/canoe trip down the Niobrara River in north central Nebraska, about five hours away. Our church plant was in its early years so a church-wide event meant it included almost everyone. To prepare, I attended a training/information session taught by a seasoned camper at our church. I took notes and followed all the instructions carefully. I learned the importance of placing all important items in Ziploc bags (double bagged!), with the outer bag tied with a rope to the canoe. In the event of an overturned canoe, our items would not be lost and floating down the river! Clearly, I was going to nail this. Before long the fateful weekend arrived and we set off on our adventure in a caravan-like procession one Friday afternoon.

After camping overnight, we awoke the next morning and prepared all our equipment for the Saturday canoe trip. Our little family got divided up with John and me in separate canoes. The boys were with John, Megan was with me, and Emily actually joined some girlfriends in another canoe. Somehow or another my canoe—in which I was the only adult—was the last one to shove off (while hard to believe, a three year old can't actually help and my experience consisted of note taking rather than actual canoeing). I clearly remember looking ahead and seeing absolutely NO ONE and feeling somewhat panicked. But shortly after rounding a bend in the river I spotted Emily and her friends—good news! But they were treading water in the Niobrara while watching their capsized canoe float down the river, sans oars—bad news! The irony that I would be their rescuer was not lost on me (where WERE those notes)... I wish I could say this was the only hiccup on our adventure . . . but I'm not a liar.

## **It Just Keeps Getting Better...**

With Emily and her friends now in our canoe, we made acceptable progress

throughout the morning. But we got hot and tired and were all looking forward to our lunch break where we could cool off, get rehydrated, and ingest some energy food. But, alas, the people in charge of lunch forgot all the drinks! I thought, "You've got to be kidding me." Truthfully, this still bothers me after all these years. Fortunately, I had some limited amounts of water tied onto our canoe, but Emily's canoe had lost ALL of their supplies (8 year olds don't follow instructions at informational meetings) when their canoe overturned. We did the best with what we had and shoved off at the appointed time for the second half of our adventure. The lunch break did offer us the chance to re-assign people to canoes as well as allow John to oversee my little canoe and its team of girls. **We rowed all afternoon. Still hot. Still tired. Still thirsty. Still making "unforgettable memories."** Our day of rowing was coming to a close when there appeared to be some disharmony (read: chaos) in John's canoe. Apparently the discord prompted hilarious laughter from John, and straight rage from Seth. Impulsively, Seth stood up in the canoe and walked towards John (probably not for a hug). But he lost his balance and fell overboard instead. This just made John laugh louder, but Seth was flailing around in a frenzy. I felt distraught, but watched silently as John gradually succeeded in getting Seth back into the canoe. We were *definitely* making memories—just not the kind I was expecting!

The next morning was Sunday, and when menacing dark clouds began to approach we unanimously agreed on abbreviating the full-blown outdoor worship service previously planned, grabbed our camp chairs and made a run for our cars. Thus ended my adventures in camping!

**In conclusion, I decided to embrace the person that I am (and that is not a camper).** Much to our camper friends' disappointment I confidently declared that I would not be participating in any more camping trips. And I am happy to say that after 30+ years I have never regretted that decision. I am now a happy (non)camper.